

Reform Through The Single School Complex

The Single School Complex – Elementary Feeder Schools to Middle Schools to a High School – is the most useful and promising “unit” of reform. The individual classroom, or teacher or principal or school, or school level are important parts of the whole, but too narrow individually. The School Complex represents the complete P-20 pathway, as children move from preschool to K-6 to Middle School to High School and on to college.

Rationale:

- Complex conforms to a community or neighborhood.
- Complex includes the entire public school pathway for a student.
- Complex forces attention to bridges between levels.
- Complex is small enough for a community to have a sense of ownership, but big enough to transcend a single school or group of educators.
- Complex can unify principals around common goals, strategies, support, schedules, and curricula.
- Complex transcends the will or interest of a single principal or SCBM council to “go it alone.”
- Complex can build links to Pre-K and post high school educational programs to create a P-20 continuum.
- Parents can be included and invited to participate even when their children “age out” of a particular elementary or middle school.
- Middle school team teaching programs can be extended to elementary and high school members of the complex.
- Complex is already an important unit in DOE reform and restructuring.
- Complex allows policy makers and funders to prioritize funding to targeted areas.
- Complex allows DOE and others to observe how multiple change initiatives work in a coordinated fashion.
- The complex is a reform unit that is amenable to new opportunities for community input and decision-making, such as an SCBM type of council at the complex level.

Impact on Student Learning

It is difficult to assess the accumulated benefit of proven “best practices” when combined into a coherent educational pathway for students. These individual best practices or most promising reforms would most likely have a positive impact when implemented in conjunction with other reforms.

Action Needed

Policy makers at the BOE, DOE and Legislative level need to emphasize this unit of educational reform and insist that administrator’s and teacher’s professional development efforts be delivered at the complex level. A Complex Reform Task Force would be helpful in each area to work on appropriate bridges and links between Pre-K and elementary; elementary and middle; middle and high school; and high school and college, which could include but not be limited to the ability of teachers to occasionally move up or down to better understand what is happening at a different level. Each Complex Reform Task Force would also work on selection of an articulated curriculum, common complex-wide yearlong schedules and other important reforms such as smaller learning communities.